

A  
DISCOURSE  
ABOUT  
Edification :  
IN  
A N S W E R  
TO A  
QUESTION.

Whether it is Lawful for any Man  
to forsake the Communion of  
the *Church of England*, and go to  
the *Separate Meetings*, because he  
can better Edifie there?

---

L O N D O N :

Printed by *Henry Hills*, Jun. for *Fincham Gardiner* at  
the *White Horse* in *Ludgate-street*, 1683.



A  
DISCOURSE  
About  
EDIFICATION:

In Answer to a *Question*,

**W** *Hether it is lawful for any Man to forsake the Communion of the Church of England, and go to the separate Meetings, because he can better Edifice there ?*

*Answer*, It is Unlawful.

To make this plain, two things must be consider'd :

*First*, What sort of Person this is, who asks this Question.

*Secondly*, What he means by Edification.

As to the Person, he is suppos'd to be one, that is fully satisfi'd, that he may lawfully Communicate with the Church of *England*; That there are no Terms of Communion put upon him, but which he can comply withal with a good Conscience; That there is nothing in it contrary to the Word of God, natural Reason, or plain Consequences fetcht from both or either. And therefore he who thinks, that there are some things unlawful in the Communion of the Church of *England*, is not concern'd in the Question; for he separates upon the Account of Unlawfulness, and not Edification only, as is suppos'd in the Question.

Secondly, By Edification is meant, an Improvement of his Spiritual Condition in the full latitude whereinssoever it may truly consist, whether in the Articles of his Faith, which in the separate Congregations are better taught, more clearly prov'd, more fitly appli'd to his practice, and to support his hopes of Heaven, or whether in the Rules of Life, which are there more exactly laid down, and more strongly enforc'd upon his Mind, or in Prayers, which among them are better compos'd, and more fervently sent up unto God, and in all other parts of Devotion, which there are better fram'd and order'd to affect his Soul, and make a truly Christian man.

These two things being explain'd, and premis'd, the Answer to the Question will be found true, if we consider these following Reasons:

1. That the Ground upon which the Question stands is false, *viz.* There is not better Edification to be had in the separate Meetings, than in the Communion of the Church of *England*.

This will appear, if we consider,

1. How apt and fit the whole Constitution of the Church



Church of *England* is to Edifie Mens Souls.

2. That this Constitution is well us'd, and manag'd, by the Pastors of our Church for Edification.

The first will be manifest by induction, if we consider the several parts of her Constitution reducible to these following Heads:

1. Her Creeds or Articles of Faith are those which our Dissenters themselves allow; which are full and plain, containing all Necessaries and Fundamentals in Religion, nothing defective in Vitals or Integrals to make up the Body of a true Christian Church. Christ that founded his Church, best knew what was absolutely necessary to her being, and there is nothing that he hath declar'd to be so, but is contain'd in her Creeds. Whatever is fundamental for us to know of the Nature of God, is to be found there, or by easie Consequences deduced from them. Would we know what we ought to believe of the Nature of Christ or his Offices, the Designs of his coming upon Earth, the Constitution of his Reign and Government, the Rewards and Punishments of his Laws, the Times of Account and Retribution, the mighty Miracles and extraordinary Acts of Providence to confirm these, we may read them at large in Holy Writ, and find wisely summ'd up in our Creeds. Whose Articles, to help the Memories of Men, are short and few; and to assist the dulness of their Understandings, are manifest and plain; they containing no more, than what was some way or other, either suppos'd before, or included in, or following from that brief Creed, *the Character of a true Christian, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.* <sup>1 John 4. 15.</sup>  
Whatever is any way reveal'd by God as necessary, <sup>5. 5.</sup> is an Article of our Faith; nothing that is nice and obscure, fit only for dispute and wrangling, is brought into

into our Creed; all whose Articles are Primitive and of Divine right, none of them purely speculative or curious, but plain and useful in order to practice, naturally leading to an Holy Life, the end of all Religion. We love every thing that is truly ancient, and Apostolical; but we cannot call that an eternal truth, which was but yesterday, and we are ready to embrace all truth, but we cannot call that the High Priest which is but the Fringe of his Garment. We believe all that the early Christians in the first 300 Years thought sufficient for them to know (and they were very secure that this would save them.) And if any truth be disguis'd or defac'd by the iniquity of the descending Ages, we are ready to receive it, whenever it is made clear, and restor'd to its former shape and complexion; we casting out obstinacy and perverseness out of our Practice, as well as niceness out of our Creed. That Creed that Christ and his Apostles taught, the Saints, Martyrs, and Confessors, the Wise and Good Men in the first and purest days of Christianity believ'd, and were secure of Heaven by it, and therefore added no more; that Faith this Church maintains, which will sufficiently and effectually Edifice the Souls of Men.

2. The Necessity she lays upon a Good Life and Works. For this is the solemn intention of all Religion; our Creed, our Prayers, our Sacraments, and Discipline, and all Devotion. Her Creed is such, that all its Articles so directly, or by natural consequence, lead unto Virtue and Holiness, that no man can firmly believe them, but they must ordinarily influence his Manners, and better his Conversation; and if by virtue of his Creed his Life is not mended, he either ignorantly and grossly mistakes their Consequences, or is wilfully desperate. Our Church publicly declares, that

that without preparatory Virtues, no Acts of Devotion, however set off with Zeal and Passion, are pleasing unto God, and if obedience be wanting afterwards, are but scene and show. Such a Faith she lays down as fundamental to salvation, which rests not in the brain and story, in magnifying and praising, in sighing and repeating, but in the production of Mercy, Charity, and Justice, and such excellent Vertues. She makes no debates between Faith and Good Works, nor argues nicely about the preference, nor disputes critically the Mode how joyntly they become the condition of Salvation, but plainly determines, that without Faith and Good Works, no Man shall see God. She not only keeps to a Form of sound Words, but to a Conversation of equal Firmness and Solidity. Her Festivals are to commemorate the Virtues of Excellent Men, and to recommend them as Presidents for imitation. Her Ceremonies, which were principally design'd for Decency, may also remind us of those Virtues which become the *Worshippers of God*. Her Collects and Petitions are for Grace to subdue our Follies, and to fortifie our resolutions for Holiness. Her Discipline is to lash the sturdy into Sobriety and Goodness: And her Homilies are plainly and smartly, to declare against the gross Acts of Impiety, and to perswade a true Christian Deportment in Word and Deed, and her whole Constitution aims at the Design of the Gospel, to teach Men to live *Soberly, Righteously, and Godly*. She flatters and lulls no Man asleep in Vice, but tells all secure sinners plainly, that they do not pray nor receive aright, that they are not absolv'd, that their persons are not justified, nor can have any true hopes of Heaven, except they purifie themselves, and be really just and good. She neither useth nor allows any nice distinctions in plain Duties to baffle our Obedience, nor suffers

suffers a cunning head to serve the designs of a wicked heart, and teach Men learnedly to sin ; but urgeth plain Virtues laid down distinctly in holy Writ, and taught by Natural Reason and Conscience (without calling them mean Duties or ordinary Morality) to be the great Ornament of our Religion, and the Soul of our Faith. She sets no abstruse and phantastick Characters, nor any Marks, whose truth must be fetcht in by long deductions and consequences for Men to judge by, whether they shall be fav'd or no, but Faith and good Works, which the Philosopher and meanest Christian can easily judge of the civil interest of a Nation is Edifi'd by such a Church, pressing the necessity of good Works, not only thereby enforcing Peace and Justice, Pity and Tenderness, Humility and Kindness, one towards another ; but she makes Kings safer, and Subjects more secure, condemning both Tyranny and Disobedience ; Parents more obey'd, and Subjects more lov'd, commanding equally Bowels and Affections, and Duty and Honour ; Masters and Servants, Husbands and Wives, and all Relations are kept in their just Bounds and Priviledges. With other Churches we make good Works necessary to Salvation, but think our selves more modest and secure in taking away Arrogance and Merit, and advancing the Grace of Christ: With other Men we cry up Faith, but not an hungry and a starved one, but what is fruitful of good Works, and so have all that others contend for, with greater modesty and security.

3. How fitly this Church is constituted to excite true Devotion. When we make our Addresses unto God, we ought to have worthy and reverend Conceptions of his Nature, a true sense and plain knowledge of the Duty, and of the Wants and Necessities, for which we pray to be suppli'd. All which our Church,

to

to help our Devotion, plainly sets down, describing God by all his Attributes of just, wise, and laying forth the Vices and Infirmities of Humane Nature, and that none else but God can cure our needs. When her Sons are to pray, the matter of her Petitions are not nice and controverted, trivial, or words of a Party, but plain and substantial, wherein all agree. Her Words in Prayer are neither rustick nor gay, the whole Composure neither too tedious nor too short, decently order'd to help our Memories, and wandring Thoughts. Responsals and short Collects in Publick Devotion are so far from being her fault, that they are her beauty and prudence. There are few Cases and Conditions of Humane Life, whether of a Civil or Spiritual nature, which have not their proper Prayers and particular Petitions for them, at least as is proper for publick Devotions. When we return our Thanks, we have proper Offices to enflame our Passions, to quicken our Relentment, to excite our Love, and to confirm our future Obedience, the best instance of gratitude. When we Commemorate the Passion of Christ, we have a Service fit to move our Affections, to assist our Faith, to enlarge our Charity, to shew forth and exhibit Christ and all his bloody Sufferings, every way to qualifie us, to discharge that great Duty. She hath indeed nothing to kindle an Enthusiastick heat, nor any thing that savours of Raptures and Extasies, which commonly flow from temper or fraud, but that which makes us manly devout, our judgment still guiding our affections. When we enter first into Religion, and go out of the World, we have two proper Offices, Baptism, and Burial, full of Devotion to attend those purposes: so that if any doth not pray, and give thanks, communicate, and live like a Christian, 'tis not because the Services to promote these are too plain, and

B

hungry,

hungry, beggarly and mean, but their own mind is not fitly qualify'd before they use them; bring but an honest mind to these parts of Devotion, a true sense of God, sober and good purposes, and affections well dispos'd, that which is plain will prove Seraphical, improve our Judgment, heighten our Passions, and make the Church a Quire of Angels. Without which good disposition our Devotion is but constitution or melancholy peevishness, fullness, or Devotion to a Party, a Sacrifice that God will not accept.

4. Her Order and Discipline. Such are the Capacities and Manners of Men, not to be taught only by naked Virtue, a natural Judgment, or an immediate Teaching of God; but by Ministry and Discipline, decent Ceremonies and Constitutions, and other external Methods: these are the outward Pales and Guards, the Supplies and Helps for the Weakness of Humane Nature. Our Church hath fitted and ordered these so well, as neither to want or to abound; not to make Religion too gay, nor leave her slovingly, neither rude nor phantastick, but is cloth'd in dresses proper to a manly Religion, not to please or gratifie our senses, so as to fix there, but to serve the reason and judgment of our Mind. There are none of our Ceremonies which good Men, and wise Men, have not judged decent and serviceable to the great ends of Religion, and none of them but derive themselves from a very ancient Family, being us'd in most Ages, and most of the Churches of God, and have decency, antiquity, and usefulness, to plead for them, to help our Memories, to excite our Affections, to render our Services orderly and comely. Were we indeed all Soul, and such seraphical Saints, and grown Men, as we make our selves, we might then plead against such external helps, but when we have Natures of weakness and

and passion, these outward helps may be call'd very convenient, if not generally necessary; and as our Nature is mixt of Soul and Body, so must always our Devotion be here, and such God expects and is pleas'd with. Our Church is neither defective in Power and Discipline (had she her just dues, and others would do well to joyn with her in her wishes, that they might be restor'd) which would turn all into confusion; nor yet tyrannical, want of authority breeding as many, if not more Miseries than Tyranny, or too much Power, both of them severe Curses of a Nation. But her Government, like her Clime, is so well temper'd together, that the Members of this Christian Society may not be dissolute or rude with her, nor her Rulers insolent; being constituted in the Church with their different Names and Titles, not for lustre and greatness, and Secular purposes, but for suppression of Vice, the maintaining of Faith, Peace, Order, and all Virtues; the true Edification of Mens Souls. And if those Vices are not reprov'd and chastiz'd, which fall under her cognizance, 'tis not the fault of her Power, but because by other ways ill restrain'd, unnecessary Divisions from her hindring her Discipline upon Offenders, and so they hinder that Edification which they contend for. This Government is not Modern, Particular, or purely Humane, but Apostolical, Primitive, and Universal, to time as well as place: till some private Persons, for Number, Learning, or Piety, not to be equall'd to the good Men of old, who defended it, and obey'd it, and suffer'd for it, out of some mistakes of humane frailty and passion, or born down with the iniquities of the times, began to change it, and declaim against it, though so very fit and proper to promote Christianity in the World. This is a general account of that Edifi-



Heb. 6. 1.  
 2 Pet. 3. 18.  
 Rom. 15. 2.  
 1 Cor. 14. 3.

Verf. 19.

cation that is to be had in that Church in which we live; a more particular one would be too long for this Discourse; but thus much must be said, that examin all her particular Parts, and Offices, you will find none of them light, or superstitious, novel, or too numerous, ill dispos'd, or uncouth, improper or burthensome, no just cause for any to revolt from her Communion: but considering the present circumstances of Christianity, and Men, the best *constituted Church in the World*. *If therefore Edification be going on to Perfection, or growing in Grace, if it is doing good to the Souls of Men, if it be to make plain the great things in Religion to the understandings of Men*, or whatever the import of it is, in relation to Faith or Virtue, which is the condition of our Salvation, it is to be found in this Church; whose Constitution is apt and fit to do all this: And St. *Jude* seems to tell us, that true Edification was a stranger to those who separated from the common building, but *those who kept to the Communion of the Church, built up themselves in their most holy Faith, and pray'd in the Holy Ghost*. And the honest Christian, with greater assurance, may expect the Grace and Blessings of Christ, and the Divine Spirit, whose Promises are made to them, who continue in the Communion of the Church, and not to them who divide from the Body, and have greater hopes of Edification from their Teacher, than the Grace of God, from *Apollos*, that waters, than from Christ, the chief Husbandman, who gives the increase.

2. This Constitution is us'd and manag'd in the best way, by the Pastours of our Church to Edifie the Souls of Men. This will appear, if we consider these two things :

1. That



1. That there are strict Commands under great Penalties laid upon the Pastours of our Church to do this; who are not left to their own freedom, and private judgment, or the force only of common Christianity upon them thus to improve Mens Souls committed to their charge, but have Temporal Mulcts and Ecclesiastical Censures held over them, to keep them to their Duty. That when they do inform or direct their Flocks about their Belief, they should keep to the Analogy of Faith, or Form of sound Words. Or when they perswade to Practice, their Rules and Propositions must be according to Godliness. That whenever they Exhort or Rebuke, Preach or Pray, whenever they Direct, or Answer the Scruples of Mens Minds, in the whole Exercise and Compass of their Ministry, they are to have an eye to the Creed, to regard Mercy and Justice, the Standard of good Manners; in short, to preserve Faith and a good Conscience with substantial Devotion, which will to the purpose Edifie Mens Souls, and effectually save them.

2. That these Commands are obey'd by the Pastours of our Church, and they do all things in it to Edification. For the truth of this, we appeal to good Men, and wise Men, in the Communion of our Church, who have Honesty and Judgment to confess this truth, and with gratitude acknowledge, that the Pastours of the Church of *England* have led them into the ways of Truth and Righteousness, cured their Ignorance, and reform'd their Lives, and upon good grounds given them an assurance of Heaven. To say such as these are prejudic'd, and want sincerity and knowledge to pass a judgment, is only to prove, what we justly suspect, that they want true Edification among themselves, and should be better taught the Doctrine of Charity.

The Unreason-  
ableness of Se-  
paration, p. 117

Charity. Our *Protestant* Neighbours, impartial Judges, will give their Testimony to this Truth, who have own'd and commended the Government of this Church, condemn'd the Separation, magnifi'd the Prudence, Piety, and Works of her Governours, and Pastours, and wish'd, that they and their Charge were under such a Discipline, and translated many of their Pious and Learned Works to Edifie and Save their People. Our dissenting Brethren themselves (at least in the good Mood, and out of the heat of Dispute) give their consent to this, that the Instructions and Discourses of our Pastours from their Pulpits are Solid, Learned, Affectionate, and Pious, and their only Crime was, that sometimes they were too well studied, and too good. If in the great number of the *English* Clergy, some few may be lazy, one particular person may clothe his Doctrine in too gay a dress, another talks Scholastically above the capacity of his hearers, a third too dully, a fourth too nicely, and opinionatively, and here and there a Pastour answers not the true design of Preaching to inform Mens Minds, to guide their Consciences, and move their Affections; what is this to the general Charge, that no Edification so good is to be had as in the separate Meetings, the pretended Cause of their Separation; for 'tis no more a true Cause, than want of Accommodation or Room in Churches, for some to separate, where good Edification and Conveniency too may be easily had. And since they compel our Pastours to speak well of themselves by their detraction and speaking ill of them, they must gladly *suffer them as fools*, boldly to say, That since the Reformation, and many hundred years before, there hath not been a Clergy, so learned and pious, so prudent and painful, and every way industrious, to Edifie and save the Souls of Men, as now is in the *English* Church.

2 Cor. 11. 19.

The

The Second Argument to confirm the Answer is, That those that usually make this pretence for Separation, do commonly mistake better Edification. We have prov'd already, that good and sufficient Edification, to save the Souls of Men, is to be had in the *English Church*. For if teaching plainly the Articles of Faith, and laying down clearly Rules of Manners, using well composed Prayers, and proper Administration of Sacraments, be not good, and sufficient Edification, I know not what Edification means: it may be heating of fancy, stirring up of humours, this, or that, and Men may as well define the thing they call Wit, as what Edification means. And therefore to desert the plain and great Duty of our Church Communion, for disputable, doubtful, or truly mistaken Edification, is to be guilty of the sin of Schism. In most cases to judge what is better or best, is very hard, and requires a sincere and considering head; and so it is in the business of better Edification, which is so easily mistaken, especially by the generality of the People, who are usually ignorant of such nice things, and prejudic'd by their Parties, and Affections, and are *mutable and various, according to their fancies*. For better Edification, purer Administrations, and Churches, and things that are more excellent, absolute Perfection, and a less defective Way of Worship, are hard to understand, perplex mens minds, and fill them with innumerable doubts and scruples, and put them upon refining and purging so long, till they weaken and destroy the Spirit of Religion. And so they run themselves into a known sin, for dark and disputable advantages; which indeed are only mistakes, and principally are these three that follow:

1. In

Colof. 2. 18.

1 Tim. 1 4.

1. In taking nice and speculative Notions for great and Edifying Truths. When Doctrins have been rais'd, only to please the temper of the curious and inquisitive, yet have made many think, their hearts were warm'd, when their heads and fancies were gratifi'd. And dark and obscure Discourses about Angels, the state of separated Souls, and things of the like nature, have made some call the Preacher high and mysterious, while others, teaching the way of Salvation plainly, by Faith and a good Conversation, have been lessen'd, with the character of dull, honest, and moral Men, fit only for Catechists, and Christians of the lowest Form. Tickle but their imaginations with conjectural Discourses about the situation of Paradise of old, or Hell now, and you are a sounder Divine, than he, that only draws wholsom Conclusions from *Adam's* prevarication, to caution you against sin of the like nature, or how to avoid those dismal flames where ever they are. And others have been silly and phantastick in admiring those who have prattled about the length of the Sword that guarded Paradise, or how the Spirits above pass Eternity away, and scorn'd him, who in plain methods chalkt them out the way that will lead them to Heaven. The ancient *Gnosticks*, because they made a mixture of the *Jewish* Fables, and Genealogies, of their *Lilith* and *Behemoth*, and fetcht in the stories of the Gods, out of *Orpheus* and *Philistion*, (two great Divines in the *Pagan* Religion) into plain Christianity, thought themselves the most knowing Men, of the Secrets of God and Heaven, and wondred how only Faith upon Jesus, and keeping of the Commands, could be knowing of God, or Wisdom from above. The wranglings of the Schools, with their fine distinctions and barbarous terms, fitter for Magick than Christianity, by their Disciples have been priz'd for great

great and precious Truths. And Enthusiastick Raptures, and flights, making once the Brain to swim, have snatcht the hearers beyond themselves, and then thought them the Dictates of the Spirit, and the Teachings of God, and the more dark and obscure the Doctrine hath been, the greater illumination it was esteem'd, and call'd a noon-day Thought, which was a mid-night Dream. Such things as these pass with too many for saving Truths, a great part of Mankind being ignorant in their Heads, and corrupt in their Practice, espous'd to Parties and Interests, having Constitutions and Passions fit for these, they readily swallow them down. The Apostle confirms the truth of this, telling <sup>2 Tim. 4. 1.</sup> *us the time will come, when they will not endure sound Doctrine, but after their own lusts, shall they heap to themselves Teachers, having itching ears, caus'd by some disease of Vice within, which is not to be cured by good Physick, but only scratch'd and gratifi'd; and and if the Food, though wholsom and good, be not to their Pallate and Fancy, they complain of hunger and starving. These and many more are the Instances of a weak and sickly nature, craving only nice and curious things for Spiritual Meat, and keeking at the sincere Milk of the Word, plain and substantial Truths that it may grow thereby. To give therefore a liberty to every Man to run from an establish'd Church, upon the account of better Edification, which is so often and easily mistaken, is to direct Men into temptation and a snare, and is dangerous and sinful; and when once the gap is open, where will, especially the Vulgar stop? May we not add, that this pretence of better Edification is very fit to disguise and colour other Vices. When Controversies have unhappily risen, from an unjust denial of the Ministers Rights and*

C

Dues,

Dues, or the accidents of civil conversation, they make the Ministry, that was spiritual and good before, to be call'd dull and mean, and better must be sought elsewhere, while only Revenge or Covetousness is at the bottom. Wandring Reports, or their own lavish Tongue, and censorious Temper, have call'd some Pastours, Covetous, or Intemperate, or branded them with other Vices, and then cry out, they cannot Edifie in such a Church, and so make one fault help out another, and Defamation must excuse their Schism.

2. In taking the Opinions of Parties for undoubted Truths essential to salvation. When men have once wedded a Party, and the Opinions peculiar to it, they magnifie and propagate them, grow furious for their defence, and call them the best part of Religion: and if these be not abetted and cry'd up by the Pastours of our Church, or they differ from them in explications and distinctions of them, the way of salvation is not taught, they do not improve their Spiritual condition, and therefore is a just cause of their separation. Because the Notion or Explication of Faith, and Spirit, Church, and Grace, Justification, Regeneration, Conversion, Adoption, and other things of the like nature, are generally different in our Church from those of the separation, they therefore cry we destroy the saving Truths of the Gospel, and instead of being Edifi'd, they find themselves weakened in their Christian Faith. Though 'tis plain to all impartial judgments, that *their sense and interpretation* of them, by natural consequences lessen the Grace of the Gospel, and give security to lazy sinners, a strange sort of Edification. For though our Charity is not so narrow, as to think every man a vicious person, who is thus mistaken in his conclusions, yet however, this alters  
not

not the nature of these Opinions, and their consequences; and who knows how far men of ill Principles do improve them? Such is the perverse and angry temper of many about their own Opinions, no way necessary to salvation, wherein wise men and good men may differ, which are not stated by Authority, and may not be determin'd till *Elias* come; yet if these be not insisted on, and press'd with vehemency, the great things of the Gospel are omitted, and truths are wanting to their perfection. And if once the People are possess'd with Opinions and Notions, they grow fierce about them, and call them salvation truths, and run head-long into a Sea of disorder; and tumult, for their defence. The Disciples of the fifth Monarchy, the Pretenders to the Spirit, the Enemies of Childrens Baptism, think themselves wrong'd, and the Gospel hidden, if casually they hear you making Interpretations of the Kingdom of Jesus, the Operations of the Spirit, and that divine Institution, different from their lewd sense. And many Questions, when determin'd, after a great deal of labour, and passion, and expence of time, may improve our Knowledge, but not Faith and a good Life, the only Edification. The early and best Christians thought themselves mighty Saints, and secure of Heaven, if they only knew *Jesus and the Resurrection* in their full extent, and the World being such ill Judges about any other Edification, it would be well if they return'd to this good old way, and rest satisfi'd there, lest they take the Inventions of Men, Rhetorick, or subtilty, secular interest, or conjectures, for the Pillars of the Temple, to support their Faith; and so upon the score of Edification, break the Peace and Unity of the Church, and Obedience to our Governours, the great things of Religion.



3. In taking sudden heats and warmth for true Edification, when melting tones, affectionate expressions, solemn looks and behaviour, passion and vehemency, and other Arts have play'd upon the fancy, and put their constitutions into different motions, some have thought themselves so strangely Edifi'd, as though it was the impulse and powerful acting of the Divine Spirit ; which many times is no more than a bright or a lowring day can do, acting upon the Animal Spirits, and a Dose of Physick will do the same. And if they carry the men no further, improve no virtue in them, they are nothing else but down right flesh and blood. And they are hot and cold, high and low, very changeable and uncertain, according as the humours flow, and as is the bodily temper of the men. Upon this account some are melted into Tears, and others are fired into Rage and Zeal, their Spirits, like Tinder, easily catching the flame ; and these have happened in the worst of Men, serving only the Designs of Fury and Hypocrisie, and can no more be called Edification, than the Fire from the Altar, that may consume the Temple, Zeal. Yet such mistakes as these have been too common; Anger and Revenge have been called Zeal for God ; Trade and Interest have been baptized Christianity ; Fury and Fumes of the Stomach have been thought the Divine Spirit ; ridiculous Looks and unmanly Postures have been fanci'd true Acts of Devotion, and when they themselves were pleas'd, and in the good humour, God was reconcil'd, and when they were dull and heavy, the Spirit was withdrawn : and according as these heats and bodily passions are stirr'd, so the Ministry was Edifying or unprofitable ; pale Cheeks and hollow Looks have been counted.



counted signs of Grace, and the Disease of their body pass'd for the Virtue of their mind. And when a Doctrine hath been so insinuated, as to hit and favour these, they were strangely improv'd, and had obtain'd a good degree in Religion. Many of these may be beginnings, or occasions, leading unto Religion, and may serve some good purposes in men that can manage them well, but to cry up these for Edification, and going on unto perfection, is to betray their People into the power of every Cheat and Impostor, who hath the knack to raise these heats, which pass for reason and conviction of mind; and most commonly are great hindrances to solid and sound reasoning, plain discourses, the true way to Edification, to make firm and lasting impressions upon the mind; while the silly and the weak, who are most subject to these heats and colds, the uncertain motions of their spirits, are sickle and inconstant, turning round in all Religions, such men being all sail are more easily tost about with every wind of Doctrine.

3. Argument to confirm the Answer is; That pretence of better Edification will cause endless Divisions in the Church. This Question doth suppose that every man must judge, and so great a part of the World being ignorant and vicious, partial and prejudic'd, false and insincere to themselves and others, they may run from Teacher to Teacher, from *Presbyterian* to *Independent*, from *Independent* to *Anabaptist*, or *Quaker*, and never stop till they come at their Grave to find out better Edification, *ever learning, and never coming to the knowledge of the truth*, ever seeking and never satisfi'd, till they find the Pattern upon the Mount, or the new *Jerusalem* be come down from above,

<sup>2</sup> Tim. 3. 7.

above, till they meet with such a perfect Church, as perhaps will never be here upon earth, till her great Master comes. The ignorant will easily mistake, and who can know the heart and intention of the false and the hypocrite? And the Governour hath nothing to do here to retrench this liberty, which, as they pretend, is either born with them, or given them by God. At this rate, may not every single person be a Church, leaving all other Christian Societies, fancying that he can better Edifie at home with the workings of his own mind, and some pretended infusions of the Spirit, that he shall better meet with in his privacies and retirements than in an external and carnal Ministry and Crowd. When once they have torn the Unity of the Church in pieces, and set up their more Edifying Meetings, in comes whole shoals of Vices, Envy and Detraction, Strife and Emulation, Murmurings and Complaining, Fierceness and Wrath, and a great number of things more, prejudicial to the state of the Kingdom, the interest of Families, the good of Friendship and all civil Conversation, a wonderful Edification, destroying the very soul of Christianity. The same Principles that divide them from this Church, will crumble them into endless Parties, and every little Chp may call it self a Building, and so destroy all good Government and Discipline, so necessary to propagate and preserve Christianity in the World. And should I live to see that fatal day, when the Government in our Church should be dissolv'd, and liberty given to every man, upon pretence of better Edification, to chuse his Pastour and his Church, so many Mischiefs and Confusions would follow from it, that If there was any regard to common Christianity, or sense of temporal happiness left within their Breast, they

they would too late repent their Schism, (as once in a great degree many of them did) and beg upon their Knees, that the Pale of this Government in Church might be set up again, and they would receive it with all its pretended load of Impositions. This will certainly follow from dividing from the Church, to the laughter of *Rome*, and joy of all the Enemies of our Christian Religion. All this would be avoided if men were sensible of the hainous nature of Schism, which the Apostles and all the ancient Christians have painted forth in such black colours, though others think our Divisions in the Church are no more, than variety of Companies and Liveries in a City.

4. What great discouragement this is to an honest and truly Christian Ministry. When a Pastour of our Church shall diligently and faithfully, plainly and devoutly unfold the Articles of Faith, and lay down Rules for Practice, which will certainly bring him to Heaven, yet his Flock or Charge, one after another, upon pretence of greener Pastures, greater Knowledge, better Elocution, Delivery, Tone, or the like, to be had elsewhere, shall run from him; will it not cool his Zeal, check his Labours, and affront his Person and Office? This may be done to the painful, as well as idle, to the judicious and learned, as well as imprudent and ignorant Pastour, where the People shall have liberty of Separation for the sake of Edification. The ill effects of this have turn'd upon their own Ministers, and new Government, and the most judicious among them have sadly complain'd of it. Formerly they Petition'd, for a painful and preaching Ministry, but this pretence of better Edification gives denial to their own request; such Discouragements as these

these happening severely sometimes to the best of Pastours, as well as the worst. And they have no cure for this, having put a power into the Peoples hands which they cannot recall; for neither King, Parliament, Bishop, or Pastour, can tell them what is Edification so well as themselves. And are the Pastours of the Church to be so treated and trifled with, who derive their Offices and Authority from God to Command and Perswade, to Rebuke and Exhort, and have the Charge of Souls committed to them, for fancies, peevishness and humour, to be scorn'd and discountenanc'd, and have their Ministry rendred useles, and the Sheep to govern the Shepherd; But what if our Pastour be idle or remiss in his Duty, or corrupt in his Faith, and teacheth Error instead of sound Doctrine, and we have no means of Edification? what must we do? must we take in Poyson for Food? or not be fed at all? to be sure you must not run into Schismatical Separation; 'tis more tolerable to go to other Congregations of our Communion, that may be irregular, but 'tis not schismatical; but thanks be to God we have a Government, which upon a just and modest Complaint, will quicken the lazy and negligent, correct the Heretical Pastour, and restore to you true Edification.

That this Discourse may prevail upon such who make this Question, I desire to recommend these two following things, which are very reasonable, to their consideration.

1. That if they fancy any Defects in our Government, they should not hence conclude, that they have not sufficient Edification in the Church to save their Souls. If upon a nice search and critical enquiry, they think,

think they have found some little Flaws and Defects, improper Phrases, doubtful Senses, and some small Omissions in the matter of our Prayers and Discipline, yet let them not conclude, that these can weigh in the ballance against the black sin of Schism and Separation, and all its sad Consequences, which is excus'd by nothing else but terms of communion plainly sinful. Have not Divine Services been accepted, which were less perfect, and came not up to their rule? as is plain in *Hezekiah's Passover*, which was not to the *Purification of the Sanctuary*, yet the good King's Prayer and the necessity of the time prevail'd with God to heal the People, that is, to repute them clean and well prepar'd, and their Sacrifice and Devotion good. Is there no Reverence to be paid to the Pious Authors of our Service and Reformation, but to tell them, they must divide from them, were they now living? for they cannot Edifice under that Religion and Government for which they dy'd. Is there, or will there ever be any Government in the Church, so well fram'd and built, but some curious Surveyor can spy out some disproportion or ill shape, especially if assisted by ill Nature, Emulation, the Spirit of Pride and Contention, which is ever quick sighted abroad, and blind at home? the difficulty of knowing what is utmost perfection, and absolute purity of Administrations, (which, till attain'd, these Men think they are not to rest in any Church) should make them judge candidly, interpret fairly, and comply with every thing, that is not sinful, to preserve Peace and Love. When Men in the *English Church* are plainly taught to believe well, to live well, and to dye well, and have good and proper Offices to serve

D

these

2 Chron. 30.  
18, 19, 20.

these great purposes, - in order to their Salvation, what can they desire more? to be better, or more sav'd, we know not what it means. To leave such a Communion, upon such an account, proceeds from peevishness, uncharitableness, or some ill Principle, and is down right Schism, if ever there was Schism in the World. Bring but an honest, sincere and teachable mind, and it will find improvement and advantage in Offices and Administrations fuller of spots and blemishes far than they can pretend to find in the *English Church*; but if the mind be byass'd by a Party, or corrupted by Designs, if its Pallate be vitiated, the best Food is coarse and insipid to it.

2. Let Edification be plac'd in the substantial things of Religion. Some revolt from our Church for things wherein the Pastour is solely concern'd, and others for things of decency, and indifference; but these things do not concern the Case of Edification: That a right Faith, and an honest Conversation, are not taught in our Church, is only a scandal cast upon her, to plead for their unjust Separation. For after she hath plainly and distinctly taught the Articles of Faith, (as was prov'd before) with the same Spirit and Zeal she commands and presses Justice, Humility, Mercy, and every Virtue that is necessary to a true Christian Life, and both under the Penalty of Eternal Damnation; these, and these alone, do truly Edifie the Souls of Men, as is plain, if we consider, that our Prayers and Sacraments, our Churches Ceremonies and Discipline, and all other parts in Religion are in order to, and minister unto Faith their head,

head, that works by love : and the nearer these approach unto, and the greater service they do to this design, the greater degree they have in Religion, and more value is set upon them. This is that Religion which our first Parent was of in his Paradise and innocency; *Noah* and his Posterity in their Precepts, and Pious Men in different Countries before the Law of *Moses* thus serv'd God. And the scope and aim of the *Jewish* Law, with its Temple and Utensils, its Figures and Ceremonies, was to discipline and teach Men thus to be good, with allowance to the Nature of that People, and the Times they liv'd in. And the best and most knowing *Pagans* thought such a Religion as this would most please God, who therefore in some measure did accept it, and reward it with greater Discoveries, as is plain in *Cornelius*, the Queen of *Candaces* Treasurer, Acts 9. 37. and others, who having not the Law, were a Law Acts 10. 4. unto themselves. In such things as these the Kingdom of our Messias was to consist, not in Meat Rom. 14. 17. and Drink, but Righteousness and Peace and Joy in the Holy Ghost. Such a Religion as this Edifies in so great a degree, that 'tis the only Condition and Qualification for the upper World; where ( though other great Parts of Religion shall dye with us ) Righteousness, Gratitude, Love of God, and glorifi'd Beings, and such like Virtues, are of an Eternal Nature, shall be Ingredients of our Happiness, and shall live with us for ever. What can be justly requir'd in Religion, to improve Mens Souls, that is not found in this? Is it to recover the Nature of Man now defac'd? Righteousness



1 John 2. 4.

zealousness and Goodness, proceeding from Faith,  
 their root, will make us truly good. Is it to  
 give us a clearer Knowledge and worthy Con-  
 ceptions of God? such a practical Religion as  
 this best prepares for greater knowledge, and in  
 Scripture sense is knowing of him. Is it Reli-  
 gion to love God? the love of God consists in  
 obedience to his Precepts, submission to his Will,  
 and resignation to his Providence, otherwise 'tis  
 flattery and fondness. Is it the design of Reli-  
 gion to bless Mankind here, and edifie them in their  
 different relations? such a Religion as this in our  
 Church will do all that, and make the World a  
 Paradise once more. This will give us the best  
 character to judge by, whether we shall be sav'd  
 or no, being the perfection of all other marks  
 and signs of our assurance of Life and Glory. When  
 we are so Edifi'd and Religious, we are certain,  
 that we are justifi'd and adopted, accepted and  
 treated like the Sons of God, that we are in  
 Christ, and have our wedding Garments on, our  
 proper qualifications for the state of Heaven. Such  
 an honest Principle as this, makes our Prayers to  
 be heard, our Devotions to be regarded, our Hopes  
 to be strengthened. This is the great intention  
 of Christianity, the Holy of Holys of our Temple,  
 and all Religion. Such a Religion as this being  
 so strongly enjoyn'd and zealously taught in our  
 Church, no ways disguis'd by a drefs of Phrases,  
 or corrupted into soft and luscious fences, we  
 need not complain for want of the means of  
 Grace and Edification; we need not cross the Seas,  
 or run into private corners for it, 'tis nigh us,  
 even



even at our doors, in the establish'd Government of the Church of *England*. Some use to say, that brown Bread and the Gospel was very good Fare; but now they are grown as nice and delicate about Religion and Edification, as about Sawces and Dresses. Thanks be to God, 'tis a knowing Age, I wish it was as good. The Corruption of it doth not arise for want of Knowledge and Information; if it doth, the Cure is near, let them value that Church and Government that hath all things in it sufficient to Mens Salvation. Let them not think so light of Schism, and speaking evil of the Rule and Discipline in our Church, so fit and necessary to the preservation of Christianity; let them not cry up other *Pauls* and *Apollons*'s; any other Teachers making Divisions among us than this Church hath allowed for their Edification, which is so far from Spiritual Edification, that it calls such Men *Carnal*. For the desire of any other Nourishment, *Beside* such plain Food, is Spiritual *Pride* and *Wantonness*, and they pamper their Fancies, while they starve their Judgments. Let us therefore stick to such a manly Religion, one great part of which is, to preserve Obedience, Peace, and Order, and say of our Church, that teacheth it, as the Disciples of its Author; *Thou art he, and we seek for no other: whither shall we go, thou hast the Words of Eternal Life? She hath all things* Ephes. 4. 12, 13. *in her that are necessary for the perfecting of the Saints, for the Work of the Ministry, for the Edifying of the Body, till we all come in the Unity of the Faith, and of the Knowledge of the*  
Son

1 Cor. 3. \*

Ephes. 4. 12, 13.

Rom. 14. 18.

*Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature, of the fulness of Christ. That such a Religion as this in our Church is pleasing both to God and Man, we have the Testimony of an Apostle: He that in these things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God, and approved of Men.*

---

**F I N I S.**

---